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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 003532

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KMPI](#) [KPAO](#) [CASC](#) [YM](#) [DEMOCRATIC REFORM](#)

SUBJECT: CDA VISITS ADEN ON THE EVE OF THE GPC CONFERENCE

REF: A. SANAA 2986

[1](#)B. SANAA 3185

Classified By: CDA Nabeel Khoury for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: On December 13-16, CDA visited an Aden saturated with political activists and senior ROYG officials in town for the seventh General People's Congress (GPC) convention. Before attending the ruling party convention, CDA participated in a local media conference on Arab-European dialogue. CDA also visited the Yemeni Women's Union (YWU), the opposition Joint Meeting Party (JMP) coalition, and prominent attorney Sheikh Tariq Abdullah. In addition, CDA held a Wardens meeting with area Amcits and toured a new community college. Many participants in CDA's meetings shared candid views on the challenges facing Aden and the country while others asked for USG assistance. End Summary.

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Media Conference: Arab-European Dialogue  
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[1](#)2. (U) On December 13 and 14, CDA attended sessions of a conference on the "Role of the Media in the Arab-European Dialogue." Sponsored by the German embassy and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, the conference also was attended by Gunter Mulack, Germany's Commissioner for Dialogue with the Islamic World. The participants, mostly democracy reform activists and/or journalists, discussed stereotypes and misunderstandings between the Arab world and the west. The discussion in one session almost entirely dwelled on how Western -- and particularly US -- foreign policy is one of the primary causes of Arab disenchantment with the West.

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Yemen Women's Union: We Need Help  
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[1](#)3. (U) During a meeting at the Aden Branch of the Yemeni Woman's Union (YWU) hosted by local council member and YWU Chairwoman Fatima Muraisi, the discussion centered around Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) programs (ref. A). YWU members also updated CDA on their programs, including legal support for released female prisoners, a health awareness campaign, and improving female literacy. Participants also repeatedly asked whether post or MEPI could provide them with training on how to run an NGO collective so that they can better lobby for women's enfranchisement. Regarding the women's political representational quota, participants observed that although the issue has been raised in internal GPC meetings, no quota has been enacted into law. Muraisi pointed out that of 22 local council seats held by women in Yemen, 18 come from Aden. "There is hope," she concluded, "but there needs to be more movement."

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The Joint Meeting Party: Another Civil War?  
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[1](#)4. (C) During a meeting with the Aden branch of the Joint Meeting Party (JMP) opposition coalition, CDA challenged representatives from Islah, the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), and the Nasserite Party to come up with two immediate policy reforms they would implement if empowered. The attendees generally avoided the challenge, opting instead to blast the ruling GPC and northern forces for taking jobs from the south and for preventing a democratic culture from prospering in Yemen, particularly after the 1994 civil war. Ali Ba Hashwan of the YSP pointed to the ROYG's hostile reaction to the recently released "JMP Political Initiative" (septel). "We are not dealing with a ruling party," added Ali Munassar, head of the YSP's Aden branch, "we are dealing with an absolute party." Mohammed Aqlan, head of Islah's Aden branch, added that "the rulers keep listening to their own voices." Echoing oft-heard warnings of a coming rematch of the 1994 Civil War, Mohammed Bram, head of the Nasserite Party's Aden branch, and others cautioned that the status quo inevitably will engender "a reaction.<sup>8</sup> Pressed again for their alternative ideas, the representatives finally agreed that the JMP would seek reform of the election process and better dialogue among all political parties.

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Aden Community College: Facing Serious Issues  
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15. (U) On December 15, at the Aden Community College (ACC), CDA met with Dean Ja'afar Hussein Mone'em and several faculty. Before leading a tour of the ACC facilities, Mone'em updated CDA on the college's several new programs, including majors in Business Administration, Computer Sciences, and Automotive Technology. Mone'em also noted that ACC is the first Yemeni institute of higher education to offer a major in Hotel and Hospitality Management. "We are facing some serious issues," pointed out a professor of Computer Sciences. "Our breakers cannot even support the electric current for all of our computers." Other faculty pointed out that the college, which has 1000 students and 75 faculty, is thus far ill prepared to help its graduates find jobs. "We need greater partnerships with American educational institutions," added a Business faculty member.

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Wardens' Meeting: Avain Flu  
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16. (U) On the morning of December 15, CDA held a Warden's meeting with Aden Amcits. CDA updated them on steps to take in case of an Avian Flu outbreak and pointed out how post will help should the need arise. Amcits asked about various USG development initiatives and thanked post for the recent outreach.

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Sheikh Tariq: The Last Colonial Adeni  
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17. (C) On December 15, CDA had lunch with Sheikh Tariq Abdullah, one of a mere handful of Yemenis of Indian origin who have remained in the country since the British departure from Aden in 1967. Tariq, a well-known attorney, revealed in conversation that he was tangentially involved with the Hunt Block 18 controversy (ref. B). He commented that he had warned MinOil Dr. Rashid Barabba' against abrogating Hunt Oil's contract, but that he was told that persons in the ROYG had "already made up their minds." Tariq predicted that the ROYG would lose an arbitration challenge, but added that it would not be easy for Hunt to attach Yemeni property after such a judgment. "It will take years and years," he predicted.

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The GPC Seventh Party Conference: Five Hours Long  
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18. (U) Under the banner, "With Us March Towards Democracy, Development and Administrative Decentralization," CDA attended the opening of the GPC's seventh annual party conference, at the end of which President Saleh received his party's nomination to run for a third term. Most of the five-hour ceremony was taken up by speeches from over 15 international delegations (including Syria, Sudan, Cuba, China and Eritrea) paying tribute to Saleh and the GPC and calling for an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. The opening ceremony and party conference are addressed septels.

19. (U) Note: The GPC's Opening Ceremony and a December 14 meeting and CDA interview with Basha Bashrahil, International News Editor of the independent Aden-based daily "Al-Ayyam," are covered in detail septels. End Note.  
Khoury